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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the behavior of children of the U.S. homefront during World War II, and found that, in general, girls and boys adopted the sex-typed behavior that their parents, teachers, and peers believed was appropriate to their gender and age. Thus, girls played the roles of mother, teacher, and nurse, while boys played the roles of soldier and warrior. The recollections of men and women who were children during World War II as well as psychological research seeking to understand the forces that influenced the children's sex-typed behavior are explored. Particular attention is paid to the war games that children played. (DB)

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"Children's Sex-Typing during the Second World War: Girls, Boys, and War Games on The Homefront"

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Whistle while you work,
Hitler is a jerk,
Mussolini is a weeny,
And Tojo is a jerk.[1]

* * *

Whistle while you work,
Hitler is a jerk,
Mussolini is a meany,
And the Japs are worse.[2]

* * *

Three blind rats, three blind rats,
Hitler, Benito and the Jap,
Started off with a yip and a yap,
And ended up with their tails in a trap.
Three blind rats.[3]

* * *

Eeny, meeny, miney, mo.
Catch a Jap by the toe.
If he hollers, make him say,
I surrender U.S.A.[4]

* * *

The German marines are eating beans,
Bally Bo.
The German marines are eating beans,
Bally Bo.
The German marines are eating beans.
They shit all over the submarines.
Eaty, Beaty, Bally Bo.[5]

* * *

Let's Make Hitler
And Hirohito
Look as Sick
As Benito.
Buy Defense Bonds.
Burma-Shave[6]

* * *

Slap
The Jap
With
Iron
Scrap
Burma-Shave[7]

Whether chanted while jumping rope or skipping on the way to school, or read from the ubiquitous Burma-Shave signs by the side of the road, rhymes became an important children's connection to the war. In their rhymes and jingles, children put words to age-old tunes as well as to those of more recent vintage, such as "Whistle while you work" from Walt Disney's film Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, released in 1937.

Related to the rhymes and chants was another of the children's homefront activities--telling war jokes. One of the girls recalled that a popular joke among the boys was: What did the Germans say whenever a baby was born? "'Hotsy-totsy! Another little Nazi!' This so captured their imaginations that they yelled out only the punch line for weeks...." The war inspired children's wit. A four-year-old boy was telling his little brother the Christmas story, but when he told of Mary and Joseph's futile search for a place to say, he changed the innkeeper's words to: "No, there's no room here. Don't you know there a war on!" Mimicking Hitler was popular among boys, who would comb "their forelocks slantwise across their foreheads, put two fingers between nose and mouth to create the Hitlerian mustache, raise right arms in salute and goose step around the playground screaming, 'Heil, heil'...." Sometimes the jokes backfired. Jon Presnell, a boy in Enid, Oklahoma, and a pal were walking to the movie theater when they decided that they would pretend to be newsboys and began shouting, "EXTRA, EXTRA, WAR

ENDS." Front doors started opening, and people began streaming out of their houses. With that--"and realizing we had pulled off a joke in very bad taste"--the boys took off running and did not stop until they were inside the theater.[8]

Humor was developmental, like political socialization. "From an early age," Martha Wolfenstein, the psychologist, has written, "children avail themselves of joking to alleviate their difficulties. They transform the painful into the enjoyable, turn impossible wishes and the envied bigness and power of adults into something ridiculous, expose adult pretensions, make light of failures, and parody their own frustrated feelings." Little children's humor was spontaneous and often nonsensical, such as endless rhyming for its own sake. But Wolfenstein found "a sharp change in the style of joking from the age of five to six, a shift from improvisation of original joking fantasies to the learning and telling of ready-made jokes." Wolfenstein, whose orientation was psychoanalytic, related the change to the onset of latency; but cognitive psychologists, in the tradition of Jean Piaget, have agreed that there is a fundamental developmental shift at about this time, with the arrival of the stage of concrete operations. "For Piaget," the psychologist Jerome L. Singer has written, "symbolic play goes on from about 18 months to the age of 7 when it gradually disappears ... as the child ... is transformed to the more overt play of games with rules."[9]

War games and war play were like rhymes and jokes in that they too changed with the age of the child. "Whereas older children can talk about their fears with varying degrees of ease," wrote Dorothy W. Baruch, an education professor, in 1942, "younger children can many times play out their fears more readily than they can talk about them." For her book You, Your Children, and War, Baruch observed young children at play. She saw two three-year-old boys clamber into upturned wooden boxes. "We're airplane men and the Japs are fighting us," one of them shouted. They're going to kill us." His eyes were wide and frightened. "They're going to shoot us," he continued. "They're going to shoot us. Hurt us and shoot us. Dead." The other boy picked up the chant; soon both were shrieking. Then the first boy picked up a wooden block and lifted it high in the air. "It's a gun," he shouted. "Hey, look. Two Jap bombers are going by." He aimed his gun: "Boom, boom! I shot them down." The other little boy joined in, and, Baruch wrote, there ensued "an orgy of shooting them down. Two small boys have conquered, not Jap bombers, but their own fear."[10]

During the war little children talked constantly about killing. Sandy, a three-and-a-half year old boy, took a lump of clay and began pulling it apart into smaller and smaller pieces. "I'm killing them," he said. "Those old Japs are getting beaten. Bombs are flying all over and they're dying all over. I'm killing them dead." But, Baruch added, there were ways other

than shooting down imaginary airplanes and killing imaginary enemy soldiers for the small child to gain "that reassuring sense of conquering a situation." The boy, or girl, "may turn himself into a person whom he considers omnipotent," such as a doctor, nurse, air-raid warden, or even God. In this way, the child became "un-hurtable."[11]

At about age four, children's play began to change. Lois Barclay Murphy, psychology professor at Sarah Lawrence College, studied the older preschool children in nurseries run by the college, the WPA, and other agencies in the New York City area. Observing that both genders "make an important transition" at about four "from dependence upon and considerable identification with their mothers to a more independent footing," Murphy also noted that "girls' and boys' roles become differentiated at the age of four or five; girls play more domestic games and boys give up playing family in favor of fireman or engineer." Moreover, for boys, "a strong identification with father is usually part of this transition, accompanied by exaggerated experimenting with aggressive expressions of their new masculine role." Clearly, Murphy had identified significant psychological elements influencing sex-typing in the homefront children's play.[12]

Like the preschoolers, the war games played by school-age children also involved fantasies about killing, but they demanded a level of verisimilitude unknown to the younger children. For

those in grade school, attention to detail was essential in everything from uniforms to weapons. Conrad Burton, a school-age boy whose family lived on the outskirts of Aurora, Indiana, recalled that the nearby woods "included all the necessities of a battle ground." He and his friends dug fox holes and built an air-raid shelter "by putting boards over a large hole leaving space for the entrance and covering the roof with dirt from the hole." The children shouldered either wooden rifles or BB guns, but Conrad was proud to carry "a wooden 50 Cal machine gun complete with tripod," which he had received as a Christmas present. And he wore a khaki Army belt with pockets for a first-aid kit, imaginary bullets, and maps. A quarter-mile from his house were railroad tracks, and behind the tracks lay the Ohio River. "Many a day," Conrad mused, "we 'shot-up' the German train going by and fired at Japs across the river trying to invade our position."[13]

Most of the stories of school-age war games were like Conrad Burton's. Dianne Peer wrote that the children in her neighborhood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, always "played war," and "this involved lots of digging." Down the street was a vacant lot, and "we dug holes, trenches, moats, whatever we thought was appropriate." "Thank God for the vacant lot behind our house," wrote Jim Land, who lived in Hillsboro, North Dakota. "That's where we kids dug our foxholes and waged war on the Japs." For Christmas Jim's father gave him a wooden machine gun, with

tripod, and "with that I really mowed down the Japs." Margaret Ellen Tompkins and her brother Jim, homefront children in Minneapolis, frequently saw the war movies at the local theater; and afterwards "we kids would reenact them in the vacant lot next to our house where we had dug a foxhole." The war zone for John Thweatt, who lived on a cotton farm in Arkansas, was the yard across from his country schoolhouse. His father dug foxholes and covered them with chicken wire; for their part, John and his friends found a section of black sewer pipe and set it up as their cannon, and they collected black walnuts for use as handgrenades. Such improvisations, however, were no substitute for the "real thing"; so at the top of John's Christmas list were a helmet, uniform, and toy gun.[14]

Commercially-manufactured toy guns, particularly those made of metal, were scarce during the war. (Indeed, most toys made of metal, rubber, and other rationed materials were in short supply, such as electric trains, dolls and doll carriages, and rubber balls.) But adults made guns out of wood and cardboard, and the children fashioned their own weapons from tree branches or wooden blocks, clothes pins, and rubber bands. War gadgets also came from the cereal boxes, on the backs of which were patterns for cutting out walkie-talkies. The children craved guns of all kinds; in 1942, when New York City's postmaster allowed journalists to examine 1,000 letters to Santa, one reporter commented that "the children seemed to consider their favorite

patron saint as an important part of war production." Many boys asked for machine guns and one for a "tommy gun and a baby brother." Of the children's items in short supply because of reallocation of supplies to war production, none seemed to be more precious than a bicycle. Used bikes were occasionally available, and in some cases, parents cannibalized several aged, non-functioning units to come up with one operational vehicle. But the shiny new bicycles of which the homefront children dreamed were casualties of the war effort.[15]

In wartime it was natural that children's play would turn from "cops and robbers" and "cowboys and Indians" to war games. "One side would be the Americans," wrote Larry Paul Bauer, who lived in Cleveland, "the other side the 'dirty Japs' and Nazis. In our scenario," as in those of all other homefront children, "the Americans always won in the end." But the children's obsession with the war did not confine itself to conventional war games. All sorts of mundane events took on military significance. Every time he took a bath, wrote one of the homefront boys, he "would fight the war with a bar of soap and a wash cloth. "Allied forces would make a flank attack" on an arm or leg, and as the boy scrubbed the dirt off, "the axis would retreat." Naturally, "the allies always won." Neva Kmen, who lived in Wassau, Wisconsin, joined the neighborhood children in fighting the surrogate enemy, a swarm of yellowjackets whose nest was attached to her garage. The bees, of course, were the

Japanese. The children "conjured up ideas on how to attack them and destroy them before they did us," with their "painful stings." Birthday parties featured war games too. A homefront girl who lived in Berkeley remembered parties where the children threw beanbags at a cardboard cut-out of Hitler, which they then "stamped to bits." Moreover, children in all parts of the country were shouting "Bombs away" or "Bombs over Tokyo," as they pretended to be airplanes. "Arms outstretched and vocal cords straining, we raced around pretending we were bombers or pursuit planes...."[16]

N. Scott Momaday, the Native American writer, was a homefront boy living in Hobbs, New Mexico. War fantasies filled his head: "... I'm in a Bell P-39 okay no a Flying Tiger okay sons of the rising sun this is for my kid brother ha gotcha oh oh there's a Zero on my tail eeeeeeoooooooooooow lost him in the clouds just dropped down and let him go over me and climbed up oh he can't believe it he's in my sights crosshairs there Tojo that's for the Sullivans well Chuck you can paint four more Zeros on old Sally here no I'm okay honorable colonel we must stop Momaday he comes from nowhere from the sun I tell you he's not human they say he's an Indian that he wears an eagle feather has the eyes the heart of an eagle he must be stopped...."[17]

And it was not just boys; girls too were enthusiastic and noisy. Jean Bonner, who had only boys to play with in

Independence, Iowa, recalled that, "naturally, as a girl, I was never the pilot or co-pilot." Sometimes, however, she was the bombardier, "a much-coveted position because of the moment when you got to yell, 'Bombs away!!'"[18]

"'Shoot those Japs.' 'Bomb those Nazis.'" Parents disagreed over the pluses and minuses of their children's war play. So too did the child development experts. "Some are distressed by it and feel it should be discouraged," wrote a professor of education, but "others declare it a perfectly natural way for youngsters to release pent-up emotions in wartime." The debate over what to do "when play goes warlike" peppered the pages of parents' magazines as well as the conversation of concerned adults. Arthur L. Rautman, a clinical psychologist, warned that "habitual war play" was "a symptom of a basic neuroticism, and not ... desirable or wholesome...." More than that, it was a sign that "our care and guidance have failed; we may know that we have not provided him with the basic security he requires." The last thing in the world these children needed, wrote Rautman, was "encouragement in their preoccupation; nor do they need more war games and realistic war-play objects to make their neurotic dramatizations more vivid." What they required, rather, was "protection against overstimulation." As alternatives to war games, Rautman urged parents to engage their children in defense stamp and scrap collection drives, and instead of realistic toys, he recommended that they give toys that stimulated the

imagination, such as a stick, which could serve as a walking stick, an airplane, or "a gun to shoot buffalo." But "a fancy, painted wood-and-tin tommy gun" was "good for only one thing--as a tommy-gun to kill the Japs."[19]

Other experts expressed far less concern about the detrimental effects of the war games. "Don't be too shocked," wrote Ethel Gorham, the author of So Your Husband's Gone to War!, "if you find your children whooping about after Japs, killing countless Germans, [and] sinking submarines...." Child psychologists tended to agree that this "harmless outlet" was preferable to the children "damming up." John J. P. Morgan, a psychology professor, concurred, adding that it was "only natural for children to build their play around military themes in wartime." But, Morgan cautioned, "the danger lies not so much in the games children play as [in] what they see and hear concerning the viciousness of our enemies." These stereotypes were worse than the war games in developing hatred. "These tactics," he noted, "were used by the Nazis to develop hatred among children for everything non-German."[20]

At the other extreme from critics such as Arthur Rautman, experts in the field of recreation heartily recommended war games for the children. One suggestion was: "Celebrate with a 'this-is-the-army' theme for your next party...." The schedule of events began with flag raising and proceeded to recruiting,

induction and featured basic training, consisting of calisthenics, the obstacle course, and target practice with beanbags. Next was reconnaissance duty, which in this case meant searching "not for an enemy," but "for a treasure"--in this scenario, a watermelon hiding in the woods. Finally, there was mess followed by the lowering of the flag. "Tell your fun seekers," concluded one of the experts, "that they are in the army now and it's the G.I. way of doing things!"[21]

As for parents, few forbade their children from playing war games. Most seemed to agree with the recreational experts that children's war games were educational and "a natural outlet for the emotions"; that they were "merely adaptations of old games"; and that they satisfied "the child's natural urge to imitate adults and to hero-worship older brothers off to war." Margaret Ickis, writing in Recreation magazine, suggested that the children run an obstacle course "patterned after the Commando courses"; take a "half-hour trek" guided by a compass; build a snow fortress and wage snowball fights; construct a cardboard periscope and set up a lookout post; and play "The Prisoner and the Soldiers" modeled after "the old game of Hare and Hound." The children, Ickis wrote, could also play "Blitzkrieg" in which "each player takes his turn swinging on a rope over a ground target and dropping beanbag bombs on the bull's-eye"; "I See a Spy" in which one of the children runs ahead of the others and "camouflages himself with whatever materials are available"; and

"Miniature Tanks" in which the children convert cardboard boxes into "a pliable tread-like oval.... The drivers crawl into their box-tanks, the commander signals his comrades, and away they go on hands and knees."[22]

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

One of the key issues in children's war games was that of who would play the enemy. According to one boy, the answer was simple: "The same wimps (of which I was one) who got maneuvered into being the Indians" became the reviled Japanese and Germans. A rarity was the child who wanted to be a Nazi; one later confessed that he did so because he enjoyed speaking in a German accent. Unheard of, however, was the child who wanted to play a Japanese soldier. Market research done in 1943 indicated that Japan was "a stronger emotional symbol of the enemy" than Germany, and many children, and adults alike, viewed the Japanese as not only exceedingly cruel, but also "ungodly, subhuman, beastly, sneaky, and treacherous." But there were ways to mobilize an enemy force; to fill these ranks, the older children selected the younger ones. And it was smaller children too who played the role of the prisoners of war.[23]

But there was a second major source of enemy soldiers and prisoners: girls. This was not surprising, for as Rosalind Gould, the psychologist, has noted, when "an all-boy group engaged in some killing, shooting fantasy" suddenly encounters a girl or a small group of girls, the results are characteristically the same. "At such times," Gould has written, "the boys attempt to make contact with the girls only as their 'victim.'" Sometimes girls, either through their own perseverance or as result of having an older brother, did gain entree into the all-boy fighting forces. Older brothers were helpful in other ways as well, teaching their sisters to play with toy soldiers as well as how to identify airplanes. It seemed that an only girl in a neighborhood stood a better chance of "playing war" with the boys than did a group of girls. And in areas where there were few children, girls often got their chance. Still, while large numbers of girls clamored to play war games, many never got the opportunity to do so. To a certain extent, segregated war games were an extension of the gender segregation that already prevailed on school playgrounds. Moreover, those girls who did play war games with the boys seldom did so on equal terms; for one thing, as a girl explained, "Girls tended to be killed early on in the war." Another added that while she enjoyed being an officer, it did not do her much good because she "usually got to be the enemy officer who was captured."[24]

"Girls were nurses," remembered a homefront girl who lived in Long Beach, California, "or if pushy, maybe a spy, but not soldiers, certainly not officers." A homefront boy's recollection was the same. "My pal across the street had a younger sister ... about 7 or 8," wrote Larry Paul Bauer. "She insisted on playing with us boys. Otherwise, she would throw a tantrum. So we made her the 'nurse,'" a profession which she pursued with determination, carrying a doctor's bag with a toy stethoscope along with pieces of candy, which she dispensed to the "soldiers" as pills. Another homefront girl reported that the boys "always wanted me to be 'the nurse.'" Sometimes, a girl began the war as a soldier, but when one of the boys was wounded, she became the nurse.[25]

Why was it that--in vacant lots and fields across the country--the boys fought the war as soldiers, risking serious if imaginary wounds, while it was the girls who as nurses treated them? Part of the answer arises in infancy; by the time children begin social play at two or two-and-a-half years, it is the boys who engage in aggressive behavior, including behavior intended to do physical harm. "The greater aggressiveness of the male," the psychologists Eleanor E. Maccoby and Carol Nagy Jacklin have written, "is one of the best established, and most pervasive, of all psychological sex differences." In 1986, after surveying 63 studies dealing with aggressiveness, two other psychologists stressed that in no category were women more aggressive than men;

the studies showed, they stated, that "the tendency to produce pain or physical injury was far more pronounced in men." And like other researchers in psychology, they concluded that these differences were "learned as aspects of gender roles and other social roles." But other investigators, such as anthropologists, have vehemently disputed this explanation of the differences. "That belief," Melvin Konner, an anthropologist and physician, has written, is "a tenacious modern myth," which "becomes less justified with every passing year...." Gender differences in aggressive behavior, Konner explained, resulted not from social learning, but were "intrinsic, fundamental, natural--in a word, biological." Konner did not claim to have unlocked the entire explanation of male aggression, "but it seems increasingly clear," he noted, that testosterone, the male sex hormone, "is a key."[26]

In addition to this variant of the nature-nurture debate, there is a related gender issue--that of power, which is easier to focus on. Clearly, in the children's wartime games, it was the boys who not only initiated the warfare, but also selected the opposing sides and designated who would play the enemy soldiers and who the prisoners. A study of kindergarten children in wartime Hawaii found that most of the boys "participated in war play," notably "armaments and combat play," but that other children, "primarily girls and timid boys, were never seen to participate" and instead focused their activities on "first aid

and air raid shelter play." Indeed, the only girls systematically to bridge the gap were "tomboys." In 1944 Parents' Magazine published "Play Reveals the Boy or Girl," by science writer Amram Scheinfeld, who observed that gender differences were "most marked" between the ages of eight and ten because the children "now reached the point of greatest physical and social divergence before puberty. Following this, however," wrote Scheinfeld, "as girls approach puberty first, there is a short period when they are as tall, and in some cases taller and bigger than boys their age...." It was thus between the ages of ten and twelve that these girls "experience a tomboy stage during which they ... participate in some of the rougher male sports," not to mention the war games. But what about the boys? Did sex-typing go the other way? Scheinfeld said that the research all pointed to the fact that "whenever there is any transference of play interests," it was the girls who moved into the boys' sphere, "with no reciprocal adoption by boys of any characteristically feminine play activities...."[27]

Although the historian cannot entirely reconstruct the children's homefront battlefields during the Second World War--to determine why rigid sex-typing prevailed in the roles played by the girls and boys--it is possible to glean insights from the field of psychology. Possibly the girl's impulse to minister to the wounded derived from what Carol Gilligan has called "the ethic of care." Gilligan has written that males and females,

whether boys and girls or men and women, see moral dilemmas differently and construct different kinds of solutions. For example, while males might see clear-cut answers to all problems, with their solutions producing winners and losers, as on the battlefield, females might respond in more ambivalent ways in an effort to see that all are cared for and that none are left out. Gilligan sees "the ethic of care" as operating in women far more than in men. Women's "moral imperative," Gilligan has written, "is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the 'real and recognizable trouble' of this world."[28]

Gilligan's thesis might account for the motivation of the homefront girl nurses, but it evidently does not explain the other girls who wanted to be soldiers, and who wanted not to provide care for their wounded comrades, but to inflict death on the enemy. For the behavior of these girls, including--for many--their eventual acquiescence in the nursing role, there are explanations from psychological perspectives, particularly behavioral and cognitive social learning. Like social and cultural historians, social learning psychologists have studied the social and environmental influences on boys and girls, such as the various child-rearing approaches being followed in different societal groups; sex-role modeling and its impact on behavior; the educational philosophies and techniques being employed in the schools; and the impact of mass culture on children. These psychologists have illuminated children's

behavior by studying it as the function of both "sex role standards, or knowledge of cultural expectations for males and females" and "sex role identity, [or] the degree to which children perceived themselves as conforming to the cultural norm for their own gender."[29]

From abundant homefront evidence, it is clear that girls acted less in accordance with "the ethic of care" than they did in conformity with their perceptions of what was culturally acceptable in the eyes of their parents, teachers, and peers. The "feminine role," the sociologist Mirra Komarovsky has written, is something which the girls learn. Komarovsky reported that in a postwar study of 73 homefront girls, thirty "recollected experiences in which their dispositions ran counter to the stereotype of feminity." They "disliked dolls sufficiently" to have had conflicts with their parents and grandparents, who made them feel "queer" or like "little 'freaks'" because they preferred climbing trees or playing with toy soldiers, marbles, or electric trains. "Pressures were exerted upon the girls to select girls' toys and to be more restrained, sedentary, quiet, and neat in their play than their brothers or boys in the neighborhood," Komarovsky wrote. And, she added, "woe to the boy who likes dolls!" One girl recalled playing dolls with a little boy, but "one day his mother walked in and saw the boy cradling a doll. She laughed and called him a 'sissy,'" and when she told his father, he was "quite annoyed."[30]

In the end, then, girls could consistently play warriors only if they played with other girls or played alone, usually beyond the reproachful eye of parents. One girl remembered that she and "a couple of girl friends ... used to crawl on our bellies, playing commando," and another that she and a girl friend used their walkie-talkies in playing war. Her friend's "large backyard became the South Pacific, or Germany.... Sometimes, we were wounded and turned into nurses, sometimes we died and the other turned into the captain performing a full burial at sea." Finally, Nancy Morris, a girl in Amelia, Virginia, recalled that playing by herself was the surest way to attain command. As "an avid movie-goer," she wrote, she "transferred the war action" from the screen to her backyard where she "regularly flew missions over Japan" in her airplane. Using two sawhorses "with boards across and a bombay in the middle," she "could pretend to be the captain. Rank was very important," Nancy explained, "--I was never just a private."[31]

Although the girls usually did not resist their assignment to nursing duties, they did complain about their exclusion from the battlefront. But in the 1940s, sex roles were a fact of life; the distinctions were rigid; arguing was unproductive. "In those days," wrote a homefront girl, "'Boys were boys' and 'girls were girls.'" Another remembered that "the girls stayed where the wheeping was and the boys where the men cussed the Germans

and Japs." By extension, explained another, "It was naturally assumed [that] the boys would serve as soldiers." As for the girls, one explained, "we were the support group. We were the nurses, the nurturers, the reasons the boys wanted to come home." The "boys were always the soldiers, sailors, and marines, and the girls were the nurses," recalled a homefront girl. But the important thing, she wrote, was that all the children were patriotic. "We were all involved in collecting newspapers, rubber bands, aluminum foil, etc. The war," she concluded with unintended irony, "was not gender-specific." Similarly, another homefront girl recalled that even though the girls became the nurses when one of the boys suffered "war wounds," "I don't remember any real distinction between the sexes in our play."[32]

Girls played war games with their dolls, some of which were in uniform and wearing the patches of the various service branches and commands. Valerie Drachman, in Chicago, named her stuffed bunny "Private Philip" and dressed him in khaki and Army Air Corps insignia. Other girls played with paper doll WACS and WAVES; one remembered playing "hour on end pretending I was either in the Waves or Wacs." As one girl wrote, "My cut-outs changed from Shirley Temple to men & women in uniform." There were paper doll "handsome military men" as well as "pretty Wacs and Waves." The cut-out paper uniforms were sex-specific, with the male dolls dressed "in proper attire for combat," while the women were nurses "in medical uniforms to heal the wounded." A

homefront girl wrote that she and her friends "played with our dolls as if we were in a war zone"; but even then, their dolls were not soldiers, but refugees. "We were constantly moving our 'families' to safe areas," she explained.[33]

Another example of gender differences was in the children's selection of military and naval uniforms. Boys wore cast-off uniforms of all kinds, and "so khaki," recalled one boy, "became the normal garb for young kids my age." And for boys the favorite item of headwear was an aviator's cap. "I dressed as much like a soldier as I could," wrote one of the boys, combining uniforms given him by family friends in the Army Air Corps with relics from the First World War, such as the gas mask that hung from his shoulder. Army outfits seemed to be the most popular, but boys also wore naval uniforms. George Curtis, who lived near Portland, Oregon, used to wear an Air Corps uniform to school. During recess the boys played war games, and he remembered vividly that one day all the boys agreed to wear their uniforms so that "we could play war in grand style."[34]

But what about the homefront girls? Many wanted uniforms, including combat gear, but only a few ever got them. Others used their imaginations and improvised. Some wore pea jackets, like the sailors. A second-grade girl in Lyons, Kansas, wore a brown skirt and blouse, her WAC uniform, "and I marched around proudly in it. I probably didn't look very military--I was so little the

skirt kept sliding down--but I felt truly patriotic." Some girls were resentful because it seemed only the boys received uniforms. One described her little brother's blue worsted naval uniform, with its gold braid and brass buttons. He was "always dressed in nautical style," she noted, but "I was never dressed in anything military." Sometimes, though, when there were siblings, both the son and the daughter received uniforms. A four-year-old girl found a WAC uniform under her Christmas tree while her brother got a soldier's outfit; and another brother and sister were gleeful, one wartime Christmas morning, when they both opened boxes containing Army officer uniforms. In the eyes of most girls, however, a WAC uniform was somewhat second-rate; their overwhelming preference was for a WAVE outfit. "I wanted to be a WAVE when I grew up," recalled a homefront girl, "because their uniforms, especially the caps, were much prettier than the WACS." Susan Anzovino, who lived in Cleveland, had a sailor dress, and when her mother made her "a navy cape with a gold satin lining and a gold star on each side of the stand-up collar," she was immensely proud to be taken for a Navy nurse. Another girl whose mother had made her a navy dress with insignia remembered "feeling very proud" when two sailors saluted her, and other girls boasted of the pride they took in wearing their WAVE uniforms and of their ambition to enlist in the WAVES when they grew up.[35]

It was not just the uniforms, however, that inspired the homefront girls; many also idolized the women who had volunteered to serve their country. "We were fascinated by the WACS and WAVES," stated one of the girls, "for they were obviously making huge sacrifices not staying home to be Mothers and housewives...." For their courage and adventurousness, the women in uniform served as role models--indeed, as inspirations--for the girls. During the war, there were organizations of Junior WAFS, WAVES, and SPARS. Girls also attended "Junior WAC Camps" where they were given military ranks; "The youngest girls and the first to come to camp were called buck privates, but as they proved their helpfulness, they were moved up the scale to private first class, corporal, and sergeant." On the other hand, men and boys derided the WACS and WAVES. Peter Filene, the historian, has observed that having women in the armed forces was "a startling phenomenon for Americans, evoking ridicule or suspicion" of the women themselves. Thus, while the homefront girls generally greatly admired the WACS and WAVES, the boys had a perverted view. Boys on the verge of puberty, who were developing a pervasive curiosity about sexuality, whispered to each other that women in uniform were sexually immoral. One boy, who was 12 when the war ended, reported that he "heard all kinds of stories about how" the WACS and WAVES "fucked their way through the war." One Friday evening, he saw a woman Marine at Jewish services and wondered whether she "got her share." Similarly, one Sunday in Duluth, Minnesota, a priest railed

against the morality of women in the Army and Navy, and, recalled a girl who was attending mass, he was "really down on girls having anything to do with the military. As he finished, the mother of ... a WAC got up and walked out." Her defiance of the priest "really shook many people up."[36]

Generally, the homefront girls and boys learned and adopted the sex-typed behavior which their parents and teachers, not to mention their peers, believed was appropriate to their gender and age. Thus, boys played the role of the warriors and girls the role of the nurses; to deviate was to invite censure. School-age girls, for example, learned that they ran a risk in playing war games since, as a homefront girl recalled, "some of the neighbors frowned on a girl doing so." Many did so anyway, but most did not, even those who coveted nothing more than a place on the battlefield with the boys. In some ways, it was a lost opportunity, for girls to play boys' games and boys to play girls' games. Some boys did report that during the war they not only learned to cook and clean house, but also knitted squares for afghans to be sent to the soldiers. And in some classrooms, it was the boys who won the prizes for knitting the most squares. The contributions of Larry Paul Bauer were in the domestic sphere; he ran the household in the absence of his parents, both of whom did defense work, his father on the shift from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., his mother from 3 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Larry Paul

learned to cook, and he made dinner for his father and himself; he also cleaned the house and did the ironing.[37]

Over time, of course, what the homefront boys and girls learned was which dreams and expectations they could afford--and not afford--to have. And while there were exceptions like Larry Paul Bauer, it was not androgyny, but rather sex-typed behavior that has had the greater historical significance in the lives of the homefront children. Earlier, there were discussions of two key ingredients of gender roles: first, biological and psychological differences in aggressive behavior; second, male power in the determination of who played which roles in the war games. Now it is time to talk about a third ingredient: identification, or the means by which children internalize values and, in the process, develop an identity.

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To the question: How does one develop an identity? there is no simple answer. For one thing, the term identification is psychoanalytic, or Freudian, in origin, and perhaps for that reason, few developmental psychologists have taken it on as a subject of serious study; their inclination is, rather, to investigate behavior that is strictly or vicariously imitative.

For another, the mechanisms of identification are complex, involving, for example, reinforcement, power, status envy, and fear of both punishment and withheld love. "The term identification," the historian Cushing Strout has written, "is ... a vexed concept in the literature of psychological theory, particularly with respect to the process, or mechanism of psychological forces that generate emulative tendencies in any individual." Working with retrospective materials, the historian can best study the cultural forces that reinforce aspects of psychological development, such as identification. To go beyond this challenge, however, and try to "prove" which psychological theory of identification should prevail, would be to traverse territory that, even to the psychologists and psychiatrists, is part quagmire, part minefield. "The historian need not enter this controversy," Strout has contended. "It is sufficient for him [or her] to observe specific emulating on internalizing of a given model's actions, standards, or expectations and to see if it is appropriate ... at a given stage in the life-cycle."[38]

Identification is a powerful element in children's play--and in sex-typing. "'Play' has several meanings," the sociologist Gregory P. Stone has written, "among which drama must be included, and drama is fundamental for the child's development of a conception of self as an object different from but related to other objects--the development of an identity." In establishing a separate identity, Stone has explained, "the child

must literally get outside himself and apprehend himself from some other perspective," and dramatic play "provides a prime vehicle for this." In playing house, school, store, or war, the children perform the roles which they believe they will fulfill in adult life. Generally, these roles are gender-specific. But in child's play, a major gender difference is that the girls who assume the roles of mother, teacher, or nurse have a far better understanding of what these jobs entail than do the boys who play that they are the warriors--pretending they are sneaking up behind the enemy to slit his throat, or machine-gunning to death a platoon of Japanese soldiers on a Pacific island, or driving a tank in pursuit of the Afrika Korps, or swarming off a landing craft, under enemy bombardment, to hit the beach at Normandy. "Thus," as Stone has noted, "the dramatic play of children in our society may function more to prepare little girls for adulthood than little boys." The relevance for the homefront boys is apparent: not only did they relate their identity to future heroics on the battlefield and in the air, but also they viewed these future exploits as the epitome of their manhood, if not the crowning achievements of their lives.[39]

Given America's sex-typing in the first-half of the 1940s, the Second World War's gender impact on children was unavoidable. For, as Gregory Stone has noted: "Both children and child's play ... are creatures of history." Interestingly, in the recollections of the homefront girls, it was the boys who--as

they contemplated future battlefield challenges to their manhood--bore the heavier emotional burdens during the war. "It seemed to me even then," one of the girls recalled, "[that] their attitude was 'more serious' about the war"; another wrote: "I felt the war was more a boy-thing." "Boys were taught to be brave," explained a homefront girl, "& called cry babies if they dared cry from fear." One burden for the sons whose fathers were absent was that of becoming the "man in the family." Gayle Kramer, a girl whose father was serving in the Pacific, remembered feeling that adults placed "an awful lot of pressure" on the father absent boys. "'Well, John,'" she overheard an adult telling a boy in her neighborhood, "'now that your father's gone, you're the man of the family.'" Another burden was the boys' solid expectation--and, indeed, for most of them, the expressed hope--that they would grow up to be soldiers, sailors, and Marines, and that sooner or later a war might well erupt that would challenge their courage, stamina, and, in basic ways, their ability to live up to the ideal identity which the boys had of "real men." But would they succeed to heroism, or would they bolt under fire? Could they withstand torture? Would they betray their country if their Japanese captors jammed bamboo slivers under their fingernails, or if their German torturers broke their bones? "I used to think I would have to be a soldier when I grew up," observed Fred Humphrey, a boy born in 1939 whose father was overseas in the Army, and he "worried," like other boys, "whether I would be 'up to it.'"[40]

While Fred Humphey was dubious about how courageous he might be, other boys expressed bravado in talking about their future military and naval exploits. "All the boys devoutly wished we were old enough to enlist...," explained one. Another boy also spoke for numerous others: "I was afraid the war would be over with before I was of age." In fact, some of the boys could not wait until that late date. In 1941 Allen Van Bergen, a four-year-old in Burlingame, California, entered a barbershop and got a military crew haircut on credit. He then went next door to a confectionery where he charged a dish of ice cream. After walking twelve blocks to the railroad station, Allen boarded the Del Monte Limited. He never made it, though, because the conductor contacted the boy's mother after he had confided that he was traveling to New York to join the Navy. In Arizona, a twelve-year-old boy strode into a recruiting office and announced, "I want to join the Army and shoot some Japs. Sure, I'm 17 years old. You enlist men 17 years old, don't you? I don't need my mother's consent.... I'm a midget." Some of the boys did succeed in enlisting. In 1942 the Marines issued an honorable discharge to William Holle, of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, who had enlisted the year before at age 12. Another boy, Jackie MacInnes, of Medford, Massachusetts, said that he "liked the Navy fine." A 13-year-old, Jackie had taken his 17-year-old brother's birth certificate to the enlistment office in Boston. When the consent papers arrived for his parents to sign, he signed them instead and reported for duty at Newport, Rhode Island.

"Everything was going fine," stated a newspaper report, "until he wrote a letter home," prompting his relieved, though perturbed, parents to come pick him up. But at least one of the boy enlistees escaped detection during the war; and 35-years later, in 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed a special bill granting Calvin L. Graham, a Marine veteran injured at Guadalcanal, the disability benefits to which he was entitled, but which the Navy had denied him because he had lied upon enlisting at the age of 12.[41]

In reflecting upon boys and girls' homefront experiences, a homefront girl observed that "the obvious difference was the expectation that boys would go to war as soon as possible" while girls would stay behind to tend their Victory Gardens. Most of the girls "naturally assumed," explained another, that if the war lasted long enough, "the boys would serve as soldiers." And a third homefront girl stated that perhaps the major difference did not come until years later when the "boy would always be reminded, 'Your dad served honorably in WW II--shouldn't you go uncomplainingly to Vietnam?" Some girls prayed for the war to go on, but they did so for a different reason. Romance was constantly on her mind, conceded one girl, and she "would sometimes guiltily wish that the war would last long enough" for her "to be a serviceman's girl friend."[42]

While adults tended to frown on girls playing war games with the boys, there was nothing but approbation for girls and boys working together in scrap collection drives and savings bond campaigns. Indeed, just as the war widened the gender gap, so on occasion it also narrowed it. "We both pulled the wagon to collect scrap metal and papers, we both tended victory gardens and collected pop bottles to get money for candy and Liberty Stamps," recalled Marlene Larson, who lived in Whittier, California, and whose best friend was a boy. Significantly, in many communities it was the girls, not the boys, who not only served as the "captains" of paper and scrap collection drives, but also, as a boy in rural Arkansas recalled, were "more active than the boys in war stamp and bond drives and in the Red Cross program."[43]

Because of their shared wartime goals, many of the activities of the Girl Scouts and the Boys Scouts converged. A student of the Girl Scouts, the historian Mary Logan Rothschild, has observed that from its beginning in 1912, the organization had pursued "two main programmatic themes." One was domesticity, including "the teaching of traditional domestic tasks for women," the other was "a kind of practical feminism which embodies physical fitness, survival skills, camping, citizenship training, and career preparation." To these themes, the war added another: participation. And in their participation, the Cub Scouts and the Brownies as well as the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts worked

together. Scouts of both genders took classes in first aid, knitted afghans, and collected scrap materials for recycling. Both groups too worked as farm aides and Civil Defense spotters; they raised Victory Gardens; and they placed small flags on the graves of departed service people. The Girl and Boy Scouts joined in heralding America's fighting forces and urging them on to "VICTORY." And while Boys' Life, the Boy Scout journal, exalted patriotism and glorified the warriors--"Real Supermen," it called them--it did not praise war. Although the Boy Scouts boasted that many of the war's heroes had been Scouts, most notably Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr., the group itself proclaimed in 1943 that it was "not a military organization. The ideals for which it stands are the antithesis of militarism. But Scout training produces men--men of character and decency, men who cooperate for the common good, men who have known Freedom...." During the war both organizations boomed. On Pearl Harbor day, for example, the Girl Scouts' membership had stood at 655,000; in August 1944, it reached the one-million mark.[44]

While the Boy and Girl Scouts jointly worked toward a variety of wartime goals, the major difference was that the Girl Scouts engaged in some domestic tasks which the Boy Scouts disdained, such as rolling bandages and making hospital beds for wounded veterans. In the homefront Girl Scouts, according to Rothschild, "traditional domestic tasks ... became cast as war work," so that canning, child care, and household cleaning to

reduce the pressures on working women became girls' contributions to the war effort. In this way, the girls became "Deputy Women."[45]

It was not the Girl Scouts, but another organization, the Camp Fire Girls, which promulgated a policy clearly based on gender roles. Indeed, probably no other program so illumined the sex-typing imposed by elders on the homefront children. In 1943 the Camp Fire Girls established a two-year training course to prepare its members for life in postwar America. The organization's national council reasoned that since the girls would have to care for returning veterans, they "must be prepared for the fact that many men will return physically handicapped.... The girls to whom they return must be prepared to help them psychologically and financially...." For the benefit of these girls as well as of the "girls who may not marry if the casualty list grows," the Camp Fire Girls urged "a greater emphasis on preparation for jobs in which the girls may become self-supporting." While good advice generally, the organization's reasons for articulating this program must have aggravated girls' uncertainty about their future in a rapidly-changing era.[46]

Still, in everyday activities, the homefront girls shared many of the boys' wartime enthusiasms. Both, for example, showed a fascination with military aircraft, and girls as well as boys collected and traded the airplane cards from their parents'

packages of "Wings" cigarettes. Both also made balsa wood models of the planes, which had rubber-band engines to propel them, and they cut out and assembled the model planes from the back of the "Pep" cereal boxes. Moreover, the jigsaw puzzles which the girls and boys pieced together pictured airplanes, both friendly and enemy. There were Japanese Zeros and German Messerschmitt 109 fighter planes and Stuka dive-bombers as well as American and British aircraft. One of the most popular was the American P-38 Lightning, which had a high rate of climb and a top speed of over 400 miles an hour.[47]

Moreover, girls also engaged in one of the homefront children's chief wartime passions: drawing pictures of airplanes, ships, tanks, and battle scenes. One boy recalled "drawing picture after picture of airplanes in combat. The enemy planes always had a 'swastika' or 'rising sun' on the side & we always shot them down in flames." In their obsession with airplanes, the children spent hours pouring over pictures of them. "I got all the airplane magazines & books I could afford," a homefront boy in Chicago remembered, "& could identify anything that flew." A boy who lived in the San Francisco Bay Area recalled competing with classmates whenever an airplane flew over: "There goes a P-38.... There goes a B-27." Numerous homefront boys and girls remembered drawing airplanes. Jan Heinbuch, a girl who lived in Arlington, Virginia, "spent many hours drawing American, German, and Japanese aircraft dropping bombs.... I still have a few of

these drawings," she wrote in 1990, "and am amazed that they were drawn by a little girl." The homefront girls also made model airplanes. Emily Cropper, who lived in Coronado, California, reported that her favorite model plane was "the super fast Lockheed P-38 Lightnings" not only because she thought they were "exciting and beautiful," but also because they were "probably the fastest propeller planes during the war...." Loretta Willits, who lived in Baltimore, was envious of the boys because "men got to do such exciting things, like fly airplanes. How I loved fighter planes," Loretta remembered. "I had pin-ups on my wall of planes. My favorite was--and still is--the gull-winged Navy Corsair."[48]

Probably the major gender difference in drawing airplanes and war scenes was that the boys at work were far noisier. At her grade school in Chicago, recalled one of the girls, the boys "made noises to depict what was happening," using "a lot of gutturals and sibilants" as they drew pictures of ships with their big guns firing, of "planes with bombs and smoke coming out ... as they dove into the sea," and of torpedoes shooting from the portals of submarines and blowing up enemy warships. Another girl remembered that it was the boys in her class who had "'Dog-fights with Japs," making "sound effects of guns, fire, crashes & dying Japs screaming." The boys' sound effects "could get very annoying to us girls," one complained, "& the teacher was always yelling at them." Most often, however, the homefront girls did

not complain. According to a wartime study done of fourth-graders, "'restless' and 'fights' were traits generally approved by their peers for 12-year-old boys, but not approved of girls for the same age."[49]

Whether resulting from socialization, power, or testosterone, gender differences in the homefront children's activities were strikingly evident. And because so few adults questioned the validity of sex-typing, they did not hear the girl's wartime lament that their gender had cheated them. "Oh, how much I wished I'd been born a boy!" exclaimed one girl, who "was convinced that just being a male made one brave and heroic." Another girl lay awake at night thinking about what it would be like to sit in a foxhole, eating out of a mess kit, drinking from an Army thermos, and smoking a cigarette as she watched the bombs explode. "How I wished I was a boy, so I could grow up and do all those things." Government rationing also shortchanged the homefront girls. Rationing permitted children with paper routes to purchase bicycles, but mostly these were boys. "During the war," wrote one girl, "I hated being a girl. The younger boys could have bikes; the older boys got to join the service...." The girls could enjoy neither.[50]

One girl who was undaunted was Patsy Fisher, a 12-year-old from Racine, Wisconsin, who decided that she needed to write the President. Perhaps, in conclusion, she can speak for the rest of

the homefront girls who craved to do their part. "Dear Mr. Roosevelt," Patsy began. "I am just a common ordinary school girl and so are my friends. But we feel that all the women in the woman[']s army need assistants to help them." The girl assistants would wear uniforms and, after receiving the same training as the WACs, would be shipped to battle stations overseas. "If you say O.K.," Patsy concluded, "and we get shipped across we may be in the same predicament as some of the men but we don't care.... We looked at all the angles. We want to give up everything we have for our country[,] even our lives if we have to."[51]

Notes

1. Letter #32.

2. Letters #137, #174, #413, #442D.

3. Letter #83.

4. Letter #26; "Folk Rhymes for Children," New York Times Magazine, November 5, 1944; Roger D. Abrahams, editor, Jump-Rope Rhymes: A Dictionary (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 47.

5. Letter #0.3.

6. Frank Rowsome, Jr., The Verse by the Side of the Road: The Story of the Burma-Shave Signs and Jingles (Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1965), 96; Satterfield, The Home Front, 13.

7. Rowsome, The Verse by the Side of the Road, 98.

8. Letters #240D, #270, #278, #322, #438; Iona and Peter Opie, The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 101-2.

9. Wolfenstein, Children's Humor: A Psychological Analysis (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1954), 12, 16; Singer et al., The Child's World of Make-Believe: Experimental Studies of Imaginative Play (New York; Academic Press, 1973), 14. Other helpful studies are Kenneth H. Rubin et al., "Play," in Paul H. Mussen, editor, Handbook of Child Psychology (fourth edition); Volume IV, Socialization, Personality, and Social Development, E. Mavis Hetherington, editor (New York: Wiley, 1983), 693-774; Singer, Daydreaming: An Introduction to the Experimental Study of

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10. Baruch, You, Your Children, and War (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1942), 31-34.

11. Ibid., 40-45, 67.

12. Lois Barclay Murphy, "Psychology of Preadolescent Children in Wartime: II. The Young Child's Experience in Wartime," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 13 (July 1943), 497-501.

13. Letter #43.

14. Letters #81, #220, #225, #229, #238, #259, #316, #407, #436, #442.

15. Letters #64, #74, #120, #130, #137, #171, #220, #234, #238, #272, #442; New York Times, April 2, August 24, December 9, 1942; November 12, 1943; July 15, 1945; Elizabeth Hooper, "Dolls in War-Time," Hobbies, 46 (September 1941), 12, 14-15; Caroline B. Piercy, "Dolls in the Service of Uncle Sam," Hobbies, 47 (August 1942), 28-29; "Toys Are Scarce," Business Week (October 7, 1944), 34, 36; "Toy Walkie-Talkie Thrills Young Commandos," Popular Science Monthly, 146 (March 1945), 170; "Toy Trouble," Business Week (March 23, 1946), 26, 28; Virginia W. Marx, "Toys--to Delight," Parents' Magazine, 21 (November 1946), 164-65.

16. Letters #24, #42, #97E, #110, #154, #163, #220, #286, #298, #397; Charlotte Towle, "The Effect of the War upon Children," Social Service Review, 17 (June 1943), 155; Iona and Peter Opie, Children's Games in Street and Playground (Oxford: Claarendon Press, 1969), 338-40.

17. Momaday, The Names: A Memoir (New York; Harper & Row, 1976), 99.

18. Letter #33.

19. Ralph C. Preston, "What Children Think of War Play," Parents' Magazine, 18 (March 1943), 21; C. Madeleine Dixon, "When Play Goes Warlike," Parents' Magazine, 17 (July 1942), 26-27, 48, 77; Rautman, "Children's Play in War Time," Mental Hygiene, 27 (October 1943), 551; "Children Should Not Be Encouraged in War Games," Science News Letter, 45 (February 12, 1944), 104.

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21. Petronella R. Tacionis, "A Day in Pinneys Woods," Recreation, 39 (May 1945), 83, 110.

22. Letter #110; Ickis, "What About Games in Wartime?" Recreation, 36 (January and February 1943), 556-61, 594, 609-13.

23. Letters #24, #42, #43, #316, #322; John Morton Blum, V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 20.

24. Gould, Child Studies Through Fantasy: Congitive-Affective Patterns in Development (New York; Quadrangle, 1972), 21; letters #32, #66, #110, #236, #316, #407, #441.

25. Letters #24, #26, #33, #81, #127, #130, #286, #321, #324, #441, #454.

26. Eleanor E. Maccoby and Carol Nagy Jacklin, The Psychology of Sex Differences, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 227-76, 349-74; Maccoby and Jacklin, "Sex Differences in Aggression: A Rejoinder and Reprise," Child

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28. Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 100.

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30. Komarovsky, Women in the Modern World: Their Education and Their Dilemmas (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), 53-67; Meyer Rabban, "Sex Role Identification in Two Diverse Social Groups," Genetic Psychology Monographs, 42 (1950), 81-158.

31. Letters #20, #442, #450.

32. Letters #7, #70, #251, #328, #367, #454.

33. Letters #97E, #163, #286, #328, #359.

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